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ABSTRACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) should provide disabled working women with better employment prospects and greater earning capacities. The ADA prohibits discrimination in all terms and conditions of employment against qualified disabled persons who can perform the essential functions of a given job with or without reasonable accommodation. More disabled working women are employed today than 10 years ago, and they are more likely to be employed full time; however, women with work disabilities are still three times as likely as nondisabled women to be unemployed. Black women workers are much more likely to be disabled than white women workers (13.8% versus 7.7%). The incidence of work disability increases with age. The percentage of disabled women working in service occupations is higher than the percentage of nondisabled women, and the disparity in the earnings of disabled and nondisabled working women widened significantly during the 1980s. A number of government organizations will assist disabled persons seeking employment, and the General Services Administration provides special electronic equipment to disabled employees of the federal government. (Seven government information sources are listed.) (MN)

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Facts on Working Women

U.S. Department of Labor
Women's Bureau

No. 92.2
March 1992

WOMEN WITH WORK DISABILITIES

The decade of the 1990's affords disabled American women the greatest opportunity, ever, to achieve employment parity with their able bodied coworkers. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into law in July 1990, provides the means to narrow the gaps in employment statistics between disabled and nondisabled working women. Henceforth, disabled working women may look forward to better employment prospects and greater earning capacities. This fact sheet describes the ADA, the status of disabled women in the labor force, today, and their prospects for the future.

THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act not only bars discrimination in employment against individuals with disabilities, but also assures them improved access to public accommodations, transportation, State and local government services and telecommunications.

The ADA builds on experience under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act requires covered Federal contractors to take affirmative action to employ and advance qualified individuals with handicaps; Section 504 forbids discrimination against handicapped individuals in programs receiving Federal financial assistance and in programs conducted by the Government itself. The ADA also builds on the experience of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, extending to individuals with disabilities, similar civil rights protections provided by the Civil Rights Act to persons on the bases of race, color, sex, national origin, and religion.

The employment title of the ADA becomes effective for employers of 25 or more employees on July 26, 1992, and for employers of 15 or more on July 26, 1994. The ADA prohibits discrimination in all terms and conditions of employment against qualified disabled persons who can perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation. An employer would have to make any reasonable accommodation which would not cause undue hardship to the business.

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The Americans with Disabilities Act uses the procedures and remedies of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, color or national origin. Disabled persons who are discriminated against in employment can file charges seeking redress with the *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)*. The remedies available under title VII are reinstatement, back pay and other injunctive relief.

EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

More disabled working women are employed today than 10 years ago, and they are more likely to be employed full time. The rate of unemployment for women with work disabilities, however, is much greater than for nondisabled women. The likelihood of a working disability increases with age, and is more prevalent in women with poorer education. Black and Hispanic women are also more likely to have work disabilities.

- **Women with work disabilities represented 8.4 percent of all women 16 to 64 years of age in the United States in 1988**, down one-tenth of 1 percent from 1981. Of the 79.8 million working women in the U.S. in 1988, 6.7 million had a work disability. More than half of those (3.7 million) had a severe disability.

- **In recent years, women with work disabilities have increased their participation in the labor force.** For example, the proportion of disabled women in the labor force, working or looking for work, rose from 23.5 percent in 1981 to 27.5 percent in 1988, while that of women with no work disabilities increased from 63.9 percent to 69.5 percent.

- **Women with work disabilities are increasingly more likely to be employed full time.** The proportion of working age disabled women who worked full time rose from 11.4 to 13.1 percent from 1981 to 1988. During the same period, the proportion of women with no work disability who held full-time jobs increased from 41.6 percent to 47.1 percent.

- **Women with work disabilities are nearly three times as likely as nondisabled women to be unemployed.** The unemployment rate of women with work disabilities was 14.2 percent in 1988 (the same as for disabled men) compared with 5.2 percent for nondisabled women--an improvement from 1981 when the rate was 15.5 percent.

- **Disabled working women have poorer educational backgrounds.** One nondisabled woman in five in the 25 to 64 age range has a college degree--a sharp contrast to the 3.8 percent of disabled women in the same age range who have similar degrees. On the lower end of educational attainment, 22 percent of women with a work disability have less than a high school education.

- **Black women workers are much more likely to be disabled than white women workers.** Nearly 1 black woman in every 7 (13.8 percent) has a work disability, compared with 1 in 13 (only 7.7 percent) of white women.

- Only 7.9 percent of **Hispanic-origin women** have work disabilities. However, since the size of that population is increasing at five times the rate of other ethnic minority groups, this group saw a 31 percent increase in disabled women between 1981 and 1988.

- **The incidence of work disability increases with age.** More than 22 percent of women 55 to 64 years of age had a work disability compared with 3.6 percent of the women aged 16 to 24.

OCCUPATIONS

Table I shows the differences in employment distribution of women with and without disabilities in 1988. Figures 1 and 2 provide a graphic representation of the data, highlighting some of the more dramatic differences in the numbers.

TABLE I
Occupations of Employed Persons by Work Disability Status and Sex,
16 to 64 Years of Age, 1988

	Persons with Work Disabilities					Persons with No Work Disabilities	
		Women					
Occupations	Men	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Men	Women
Managerial and Professional Specialty	18.2	16.0	17.7	7.5	13.3	26.3	25.6
Technical, Sales and Administrative Support	17.5	39.5	41.2	28.3	28.5	19.9	45.3
Service	12.5	27.3	23.7	47.7	31.8	9.2	17.0
Farming, Forestry and Fishing	4.6	1.4	1.5	0.8	2.9	3.7	0.8
Precision Production, Crafts and Repair	19.6	2.2	2.4	0.5	4.6	19.8	2.2
Operators, Fabricators and Laborers	27.4	13.3	13.2	14.9	18.6	20.9	8.7

The shift in employment away from professional occupations to service related work, is clearly shown by the "pie pieces" that have been offset in Figures 1 and 2. The pieces of the pies that have been offset show that the number of women classified as "professional" drops by ten percentage points between the two graphs, while the number in "service" jobs increases by the same amount.

- Of the 6.7 million women with work disabilities in the U.S. population in 1988, 1.4 million, or 20.4 percent, were black and 488,000 (7.3 percent) were of Hispanic origin.

- About 23 percent of black women with work disabilities and 18 percent of Hispanic origin women with work disabilities were in the civilian labor force. They had higher unemployment rates and were less likely to be employed full time than all disabled women workers.

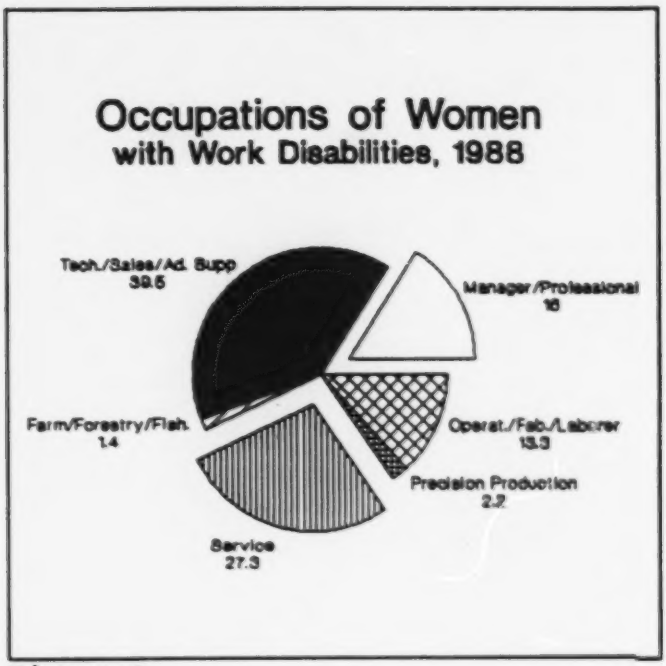


Figure 1

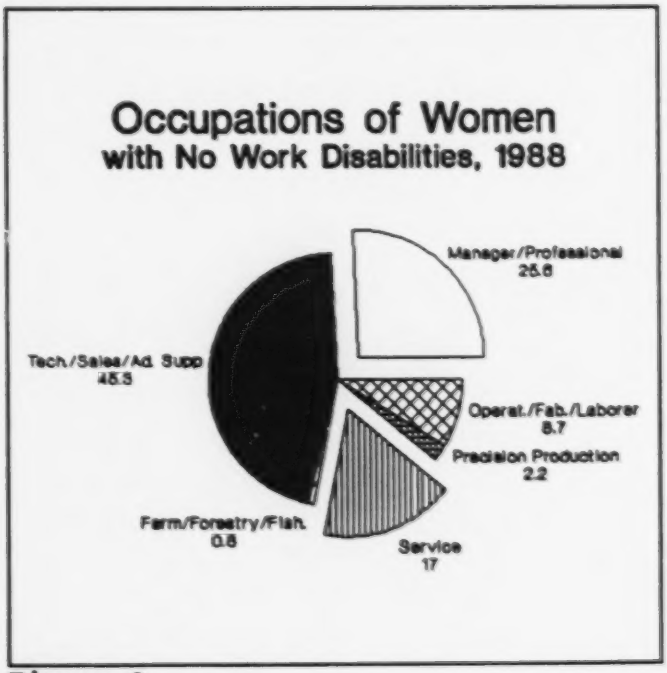


Figure 2

- The largest proportions of disabled black women workers (47.7 percent) and Hispanic origin women workers (31.8 percent) were in service occupations. The second highest concentrations of disabled black women workers (28.3 percent) and of disabled Hispanic origin women workers (28.5 percent) were in administrative support and clerical jobs.

- Black and Hispanic origin women workers with disabilities were less likely than all disabled women workers to be in managerial and professional specialty jobs.

EARNINGS

The disparity in the earnings of disabled and nondisabled working women has widened significantly in the 1980's. The differences in earnings for minority group women workers are even more pronounced.

- Disabled women workers earned 38 percent less than nondisabled women workers in 1987. This compares to a 30 percent difference in 1980. Disabled women had mean earnings of $8,075 in 1987, while women workers with no work disabilities had mean earnings of $13,000. Men with work disabilities had mean earnings of $15,497.

- Black women with work disabilities had earnings of $6,432 in 1987, while women of Hispanic origin earned $7,559.

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

A number of Government organizations assist disabled persons seeking employment. The Women's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor is working to ensure that women with disabilities who want to work have the opportunity for full and equal participation in the labor force. For example, an innovative program for disabled women and high school age young women was recently initiated by the Philadelphia Regional Office of the Women's Bureau. This program, the Networking Project for Disabled Women and Girls, brings physically disabled girls together with disabled women who are active in a broad range of careers, to ease the personal isolation of disabled girls and to open up new possibilities for a future of self-sufficiency. Information is provided on preparing for job interviews and on other topics such as personal safety and starting a business. Other Government agencies assist disabled workers specifically seeking work.

Funding from the Rehabilitation Act requires individual States to set up vocational rehabilitation agencies to help disabled individuals. These agencies can identify a disabled person's needs, promote or purchase rehabilitation services, provide job counseling and training, and aid in finding employment.

The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities helps fund the Job Accommodation Network (JAN)--an 800 phone service that provides callers with information and referrals on how disabled individuals can be helped by specific job accommodations. Statistics compiled by JAN show that 50 percent of all accommodations recommended by them and put into effect have resulted in costs to employers of $50 or less. JAN has suggested over 25,000 accommodations, and will help anyone who calls from the U. S. or Canada.

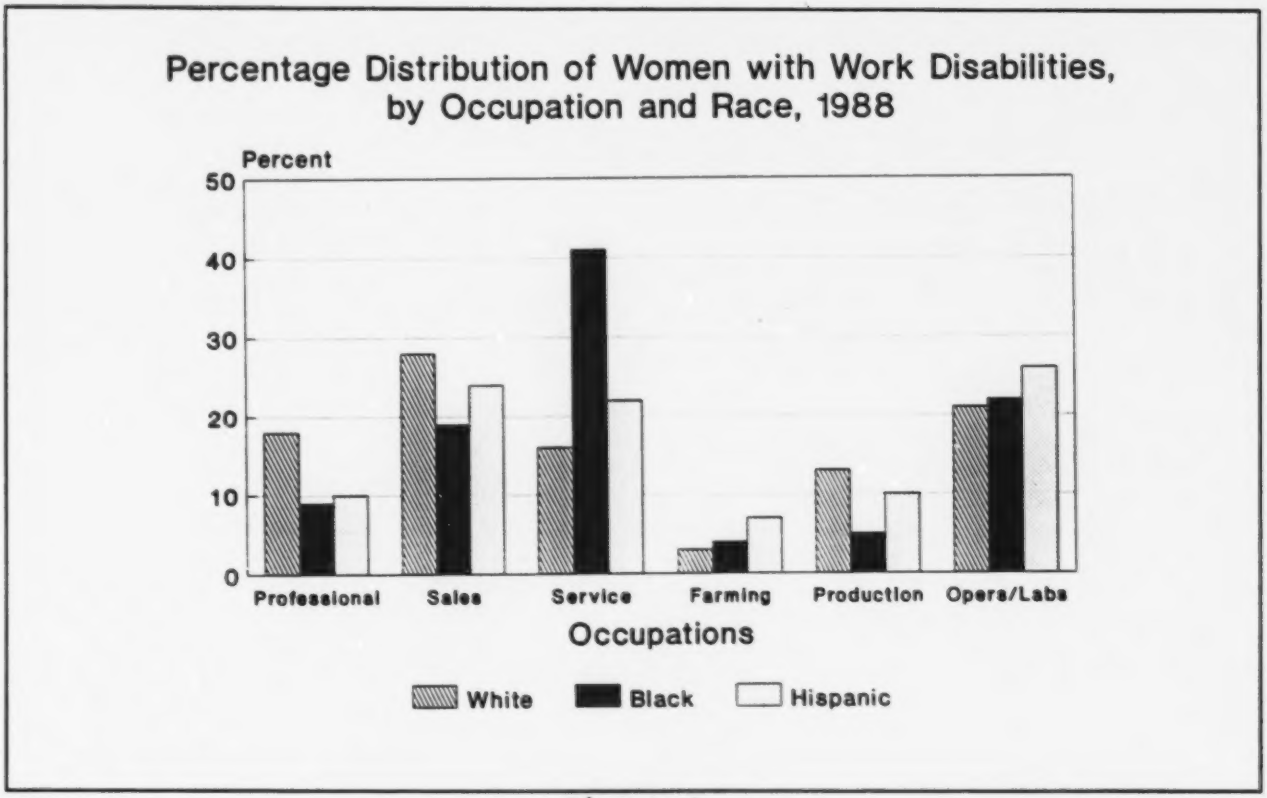


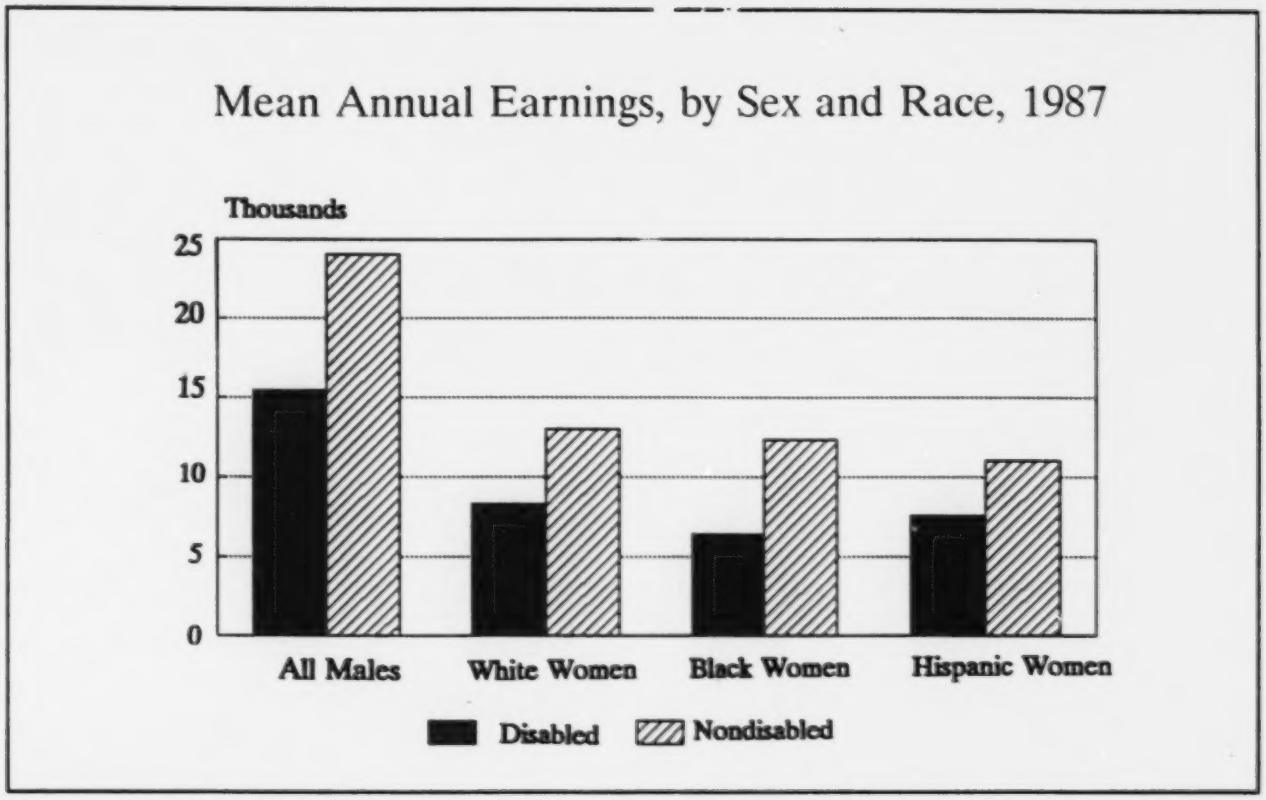
Figure 3

If a disabled person is employed by the Federal Government, the General Services Administration (GSA) will help the employing agency identify appropriate electronic equipment (computers) that can aid the disabled worker. GSA's Clearinghouse on Computer Accommodation (COCA) is a demonstration and technical resource center designed to assist Federal employers by providing them with information on computer equipment that can assist the disabled employee--for example, talking and Braille computers to aid visually impaired workers. A separate effort underway at GSA (the Federal Information Relay Service) provides relay operators who "translate" and forward phone calls involving hearing impaired callers conducting government business. This capability allows deaf callers to communicate with hearing persons, by converting voice to TDD, or vice versa.

Other Sources of Information

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1801 L Street, NW., Washington, DC 20507. For information call 1-800-669-EEOC. Calls initiated within the District of Columbia must use 663-4900. Note: Information on State or local laws or services for persons with disabilities may be obtained from State Labor Departments or human rights commissions, often listed in the government pages of local telephone books.

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, 1331 F Street, NW., Washington, DC 20004-1107. For information call 202-376-6200 (voice) and 202-376-6205 (TDD). Note: .individual States have Governor's committees and commissions that provide similar assistance on a State level.



Office of Federal Contract Compliance, (OFCCP), U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC, for nondiscrimination and affirmative action obligations of Federal contractors, (202) 523-9430.

Job Accommodation Network, West Virginia University, 809 Allen Hall, P.O. Box 6123, Morgantown, West Virginia 26506-6123. 1-800-JAN-7234 (voice or TDD).

Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies are typically listed under "vocational" or "rehabilitation" in State Government phone book listings.

U.S. General Services Administration, 19th and F Streets, NW., COCA, Room 1213, Washington, DC 20405. For information call 202-501-4906 (voice) or 202-501-2010 (TDD). Persons seeking to use the Federal Information Relay Service can access it on 202-708-9300 (TDD) or 1-800-877-8339 (voice/TDD). Information about the service is available on 202-708-6985 (TDD) and 202-708-5936 (voice).

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Division, 10th and Pennsylvania Avenues, NW., Washington, DC 20530. The Department of Justice has a fact sheet on the ADA and operates an information line (202-514-0301) (voice) and (202-514-0381) (TDD) to handle questions about the ADA between the hours of 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., EST.

Data: Labor Force Status and Other Characteristics of Persons with a Work Disability: 1981 to 1988, Current Population Reports, Special Studies, Series P-23, No. 160, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, July 1989. Note: The Current Population Survey (CPS) estimate of the prevalence of work disability for all persons (8.6 percent) is lower than estimates from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (12.1 percent in 1984) and the National Health Interview Survey (11.5 percent in 1983-85).